

Special Issue of  
*Organization Studies* on  
**At a Critical Age: The Social and  
Political Organization of Age and Ageing**

*Guest Editors*

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***Deadline: January 31st 2013***

Age is a culturally and politically resonant discourse in contemporary society. Whether it lies in the fetishization of youth and novelty or in the anxieties of ageing, decline and decay, age has become a reified system of classification and a pervasive organizing principle. Nor are its effects neutral: the young and the new are lauded; while old age is subjected to the ubiquitous narrative of “age as decline” (Trethewey, 2001). Thus age and ageing have a particular meaning in contemporary society, in which the old are disadvantaged, while the young and the new are extolled. This meaning emanates from diverse political, cultural, economic and social forces: at the same time as individuals, organizations and societies struggle to deal with “problems” associated with age, they help to create those very problems. Thus the issue of age is political, cultural and institutional; it cuts across diverse organizations, communities, and societies; it produces significant material effects; and it links organizations, politics and policies.

While there has been considerable interest in recent years in the societal and organizational challenges of ageing populations, this work has tended to take a more reductive bio-essentialized understanding of age. However, age and ageing is constructed through knowledge systems and social practices in and by organizations, which position and advantage youth and the new over the aged and the old. The nature of these practices and the implications of these meanings are so far under-theorized and under-explored in organization studies.

The objective of this special issue is to examine how and in what ways age and ageing have become an organizing principle in contemporary society; to learn more about how meanings have emerged and the different influences that have contributed to them; and to investigate more closely the political, cultural and social effects of the way in which age and ageing is organized;

We welcome papers that examine how ageing is constructed, organized, policed, managed and resisted in different organizational and societal contexts, and which engage with the themes and questions below. The aim is to use age and ageing to “deepen our understanding of the complexity of organizations as social and political objects” and to investigate “the links between organizations, politics and policies” (Courpasson, Arellano-Gault, Brown & Lounsbury, 2008: 1384, 1385). We welcome both empirical and theoretical papers and are particularly interested in submissions that draw insights from other age-related disciplines such as social gerontology, social anthropology, social geography and political sociology.

### ***Themes and Questions***

- How is age constructed in different organizational, cultural and historical settings, and with what effects? Has age become more relevant as an organizing principle in recent years? To what extent is ageing a metaphor of contemporary society? And what does this mean for individuals and organizations? Are there particular aspects of our contemporary society, of “fast capital” (Grey, 2009), that make age particularly salient? Are significant differences to be found in different countries or in particular types of organizations?
- How is ageing made real in organizations? How, for example, are older workers constructed (Gullette, 2004)? In what ways is ageing managed as a significant category of knowledge and for what ends? How do individuals respond to the ever-present processes of ageing in contexts that valorize newness and novelty?
- How does youthfulness operate as an organizing principle? How might associations of youth with newness engender the need for constant reinvention (Bauman 2004) and a “future orientation” (Sennett, 2006)? How is youthfulness made a salient discourse and how is it appropriated and exploited by organizations? How are generational categories - Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Millennials – constructed and deployed in organizations?
- What is the relationship between ageing, organizing and bodiliness (Casey, 2000)? How is ageing embodied and performed? How is the visual imprint of age managed, exploited and/or resisted? How does age intersect and interplay with other bodily forms of classification, such as ethnicity and gender (Atkinson, 2006)?
- How is ageing resisted? How do organizational members draw on discourses which counteract the negative meanings associated with age? In what ways is manipulation of bodily image used to comply with and/or challenge age-related discourses? How do paradoxes of resistance play out insofar as some individuals resist age by trying not to age, whereas others might age “disgracefully” through parodied practices of resistance? What roles might social movements, e.g. The Grey Panthers, play in influencing ageing discourses?
- How can we theorize ageing in organizations? What new ways of understanding ageing can be found in the work of time philosophers e.g., Bergson, Whitehead, and Deleuze? Do notions such as “perpetual perishing” lend new insights that disrupt meanings associated with inevitability of age and ageing? Can Butler’s (1990) notion of “parodic practices” inform understandings of resistance to age? How does intersectionality help us to understand the role of age as part of a matrix of oppression and privilege in organizations?

### ***Submissions***

Please submit papers through the journal’s online submission system, SAGE track.

Please visit SAGE track <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies>, create your user account (if you have not done so already), and on “Manuscript Type” choose the following: SI: At a Critical Age: The Social and Political Organization of Age and Ageing

All papers that will enter the reviewing process will be double-blindly reviewed following the journal’s normal review process and criteria.

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